

Pre-election multi-vectorism

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Probably, the difference in statements, actions and intentions of the Ukrainian leadership, visible in Ukraine's foreign and security policy lately, may be explained, to a large extent, by the needs and controversies of the current election campaign.

Since the beginning of the year the senior Ukrainian officials have made a number of statements that may confuse not only ordinary Ukrainian voters (who, like most of voters elsewhere, are naturally more interested in answers to social and economic questions that may be offered by their potential elected representatives) but also better informed Ukrainian and international observers.

Among other things, on February 26, 2002, President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma issued a decree «On Making Amendments to the Decree of the President of Ukraine of January 27, 2001, #58». The new decree announced that Ukraine's national security requires the full-scale integration to European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. Specifically, the President ordered the government to provide support to NATO in organizing joint information and educational actions, announced the task to harmonize the standards of Ukrainian armaments to that of NATO, to achieve compatibility of weaponry and military technology and equipment, to train civil servants with the help and experience of NATO, to cooperate with the Alliance in the fight against terrorism and in creation of Ukrainian sites and facilities for training international peacekeepers and so on. On March 1, 2002, Prime Minister of Ukraine Anatoly Kinakh visited Brussels to attend the jubilee meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission (gathered on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Charter of Special Partnership between NATO and Ukraine), and spoke about the necessity of «a quality deepening of the partnership relations» between Ukraine and NATO. Shortly before that some unidentified sources «leaked» information to the media that the Ukrainian leadership was preparing plans for cooperation with the Alliance that in principle do not exclude a possibility of Ukraine's application for NATO membership in the future. However, the Ministry of Defense reacted by stating that the State Program of Cooperation between Ukraine and NATO for 2001-2004 did not envisage membership in the Alliance, and stressed that foreign policy and military policy priorities are defined by the top leadership of Ukraine.

All those statements occurred against the background of Leonid Kuchma's recent statements that «nobody is waiting for us in the West», that as a counter-weight to the alliance of the European Union member states there should be cooperation with Russia, that Russia is probably the only true ally and partner of Ukraine, and that orientation to the West only was a mistake. The contradictions in the foreign policy statements,

apparently, are caused by contradictory thinking, as well as by hopes that each of the addressees will hear exactly what he/she expects to hear. And, therefore, that the «electorate» will vote as required, the West will turn the blind eye to certain peculiarities of the Ukrainian style of democracy building, and Russia, that is itself more inclined to make its relations with the West really strategic ones, will also understand everything in the proper way.

The splash of pro-NATO orientation of the Ukrainian leadership occurred in the period when the Russia-NATO, Russia-EU and Russia-U.S. relations became increasingly dynamic in the context of the anti-terrorist operation. In Ukraine's particular case, in the context of the new decree, it is difficult to say how serious the declared intentions and tasks are, as neither the decree nor the recently adopted state budget offers any answer as to how the new initiative for moving Ukraine in the direction of the Euro-Atlantic integration will be financed. Possibly, that was one of the reasons why the declared commitment to «broaden and deepen» the relationship received no specific answer from NATO Secretary General George Robertson other than the polite official statement that «Ukraine is an important strategic partner»...

Hence, it may happen that a fairly good (in principle) idea that have not been given thorough analysis so far that would have answered most of the practical questions, is in fact an element of a campaign that will be dropped after March 31 and will be brought back to the spotlight of discussion shortly before the presidential elections, scheduled to take place in the fall of 2004. The suspicion is supported by the fact that the slogan of «Euro-Atlantic integration» disappeared from the language of the Ukrainian leadership about a year and a half ago, and only references to «European integration» were made instead. Only recently the «Euro-Atlantic integration» has been brought back into the official political vocabulary. However, notwithstanding the inclination to making declarations, practical cooperation between Ukraine and NATO continues, as for Ukraine that cooperation is one of few real opportunities to cope with degradation of its armed forces, when the military sphere is traditionally and severely undefended, and the scarce defense spending makes it almost impossible to expect rapid modernization of the military technology and research and development. Meanwhile, in some cases the dialogue and contacts with NATO occur in a way and on occasions that are not favored by the Ukrainian party – like, for instance, last fall, when representatives of NATO and NATO member states explicitly warned Ukraine against supplying arms to Macedonia, as they believed the additional weaponry contributed to complication of the situation in the Balkans.

Among the bodies with which the relations are expected to be brought to a new quality, the most eager attention have been paid by the Ukrainian leadership to the European Union. At the end of January the media reported that Ukraine had proposed to Brussels that it would be willing to take part in forming a new military entity, the Rapid Reaction Force under the auspices of the EU. It was also announced that Ukraine had signed an agreement with the EU about the use of the Ukrainian aviation for transportation of the would-be rapid reaction force troops. Moreover, it was announced that Ukraine will form a joint brigade with Poland, a NATO member and a state that will become an EU

member soon. Earlier on, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Anatoly Zlenko proposed that the EU leadership considered an option of using the capacity of the Kyiv-based Academy of the Interior for establishing a regional center for training international police officers for peace-making and peace enforcement. Although cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in this area is a prospect for the future, currently it appears to be a good chance for Ukraine to offer itself as a real partner for a practical field, and to draw the attention of the international political community to something beyond the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Meanwhile, high-ranking EU officials have repeatedly stated that they view fair and transparent elections in Ukraine as the basis for further cooperation.

Who defines Ukraine's foreign and security policies and how they are defined? In other words, who do we owe for the «multi-vector» foreign policy and the noticeable loss of interest of the international policy-making community and officials of leading states to Ukraine and its capacity? According to the Constitution, determining foundations of foreign (as well as of domestic) policy is the power of the parliament (Article 85). The parliament also has the authority to approve decisions about providing military assistance to other states, about sending units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to any other state and allowing units of the armed forces of other states to the territory of Ukraine. The parliament also has the right to give its consent to enacting and denunciation of international agreements and treaties, to which Ukraine is a party. Article 92 of the Constitution stipulates that «foundations of foreign relations, foreign economic activity» and «foundations of national security, organization of the Armed Forces of Ukraine» are provided for only by laws of Ukraine. According to the Constitution, executing national security is the prerogative of the President of Ukraine (Article 106) who «represents the state in international relations, governs the state's foreign policy activity, conducts negotiations and makes international treaties of Ukraine. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, whose powers include appointing and dismissing top command of the armed forces and other military structures of Ukraine and supervises the implementation of national security and defense. The President also is the head of the National Security and Defense Council. The practical implementation of the foreign and defense policies lies with the Cabinet of Ministers and relevant ministries.

How the parliament that will be elected on March 31 is likely to set foreign policy and security priorities and objectives and address foreign policy, security and defense tasks? What resources will be available for implementation of those tasks? Although the issues of foreign policy and security are not the key issues of focus for Ukrainian (and not just Ukrainian) voters and, therefore, are given traditionally less importance in agendas of political parties and blocks that run for seats in the parliament, the attitude to international and intergovernmental institutions, primarily to NATO and other collective security systems is seen as symbolic in judging about «pro-Western» or «pro-Russian» orientation of a particular political force. In most of the cases identification of the preferred foreign policy vector is one of the key differences between the Ukrainian left-wingers and the Ukrainian right.

Noteworthy, the splash of activism and increasing number of statements on foreign

policy and defense themes originates directly from the President of Ukraine and the executive branch, while political parties that take part in the election race formulate their foreign policy and international security objectives and pledges in a rather neutral, vague language. Noteworthy, rather clear and specific formulations about NATO and individual states with which the parties plan to develop cooperation in the foreign policy and international security fields, included in the «big» political agendas, are made much more general, or even disappear from the short official versions of the election programs. For instance, the block of the Democratic party and the Democratic Union, led to the elections by former Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council Volodymyr Horbulin, promises to pursue «the creation of a national security doctrine and a foreign policy doctrine that will be based on interests of the citizens and the people of Ukraine in the contemporary geopolitical environment». The block of pro-presidential parties, «Za Yedynu Ukrainy!» («For United Ukraine»), declares the intention to promote Ukraine's involvement «in the international coalition of the fight against terrorism, the formation of an international system of protection of democratic values, active opposition to extremism and intolerance», which is rather close to the declared new objectives and priorities of NATO, and, at the same time, is not against security cooperation with Russia which itself is rather active in fostering relations with NATO in the context of the fight against terrorism. The United Social Democrats declare in their election program the intention to pursue the formation of a general European collective security system, which will involve countries of Western, Central, Eastern Europe and Russia. The Greens, as the image of the party requires, state opposition to Ukraine's membership in any military blocks, speak against permanent deployment of foreign troops on the territory of Ukraine and pledge to promote things that do not appear to be realistic in the foreseeable future (like gradual demilitarization of the Black Sea region) or within their control at all (like granting Ukraine a permanent seat as a nuclear-free member of the UN Security Council). The left-wingers traditionally promise a certain collective security system that would be based on closer cooperation with the CIS states. Their ideas about the format of Ukraine's international cooperation in the field of security and defense range from creation of a «system of collective security with Russia and Belarus» (block of Natalia Vitrenko) to complete exclusion of any declaration of attitude to the issue from the election program of the Socialist Party. Interestingly, notwithstanding of the presence of a vast foreign policy section in the political agenda of Victor Yushchenko's Nasha Ukraina, which includes, among others, some consistent advocates of Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine, in the short official election program of the block the foreign policy priorities and objectives are reduced to commitment to facilitate «formation of new regional structures for development of cooperation with neighbor states» and to provide for «closer cooperation with the Ukrainian diaspora and formation in the world of the united and influential Ukrainian community». Hopefully, when in the parliament, Nasha Ukraina will pursue the foreign policy intentions specified in its «big» program and designed to strengthen the global security system.

Hence, we may observe that as the election campaign gains momentum, foreign and security policy begins to play an increasingly important role in the matter of forming a favorable international image of Ukraine, noticeably undermined by the «tape scandal» and strong suspicions about violations of the election law and attempts to influence the

free expression of the voters' will. Noteworthy, simultaneously with the efforts to improve Ukraine's image there are references to «agents of influence» and unofficial but rather clear hints that Ukraine will not tolerate interference with its internal affairs, that other states should not «bet» on a specific participant of the Ukrainian electoral process and give advice about the quality of Ukrainian democracy. Comments, made in such tone, may harm Ukraine's image even further and undermine the efforts of the Foreign Ministry to build Ukraine's international image as a democracy and a suitable partner.

Since the foreign policy of a state is, first and foremost, the continuation of its domestic policy and reflection of its domestic policy goals, it makes little sense to try to divide one from the other «for external use», particularly during the election campaign. It is true that regular fair and transparent elections constitute one of the fundamental features of democracy in action, but the presence of elections does not automatically guarantee the presence of democracy.